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SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER MADURO BLASTS PERUVIAN COUNTERPART

REF: CARACAS 000028

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Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR DANIEL LAWTON,
REASON 1.4 (D)

¶1. (C) Summary. Venezuelan Foreign Minister Maduro lashed out at the Peruvian government in the wake of Peruvian Foreign Minister Garcia Belaunde's reported reference to Venezuela's unsuccessful bid to secure a rotational UNSC seat. Maduro told reporters November 11 that his Peruvian counterpart is the "heir of the hypocrisy, racism, and two-faced conduct shown by the Peruvian oligarchy over the last 180 years." The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (BRV) appears content to do more damage, rather than try to return diplomatic relations with Peru to the ambassadorial level. Unlike his more temperate and diplomatic predecessor, former Foreign Minister Ali Rodriguez, Maduro -- a more typical Bolivarian -- continues to compound Venezuela's radical foreign policy with his aggressive public statements. End Summary.

War of Words

¶2. (SBU) Peru first recalled its ambassador from Caracas after President Chavez publicly endorsed then Peruvian presidential hopeful Ollanta Humala during Humala's January 3 visit to Caracas (Reftel). After Chavez continued to make public statements about Peru's presidential election, Peru withdrew its ambassador indefinitely in early May. The BRV responded in kind. Asked recently about repairing relations with Venezuela, Peruvian Foreign Minister Jose Garcia Belaunde reportedly told reporters that "We have to allow President Chavez to lick his wounds of his (UNSC) defeat."

¶3. (SBU) Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro responded by lashing out at his Peruvian counterpart, telling reporters on November 11 that "This is nothing other than the legacy that the Peruvian oligarchs bequeathed to their offspring." Maduro also lamely tried to blame the United States calling the Peruvian Foreign Minister a "boot-licker" of President Bush. He added that Garcia Belaunde's statement was "just another part of the U.S. empire's plan to stir up intrigues and break up the new process of South-South and Latin American integration." Maduro also called the Garcia government in Peru a "fledgling administration that is precariously in power."

¶4. (SBU) Media outlets in Venezuela covered the tough counter-statements made by both Belaunde and Garcia.

Belaunde reportedly told reporters November 12 that Maduro's comments had the "arrogant and over-bearing stench of the nouveaux riche." Venezuelan daily "El Nacional" published the same day a full-page interview with Peruvian President Alan Garcia in which Garcia said Chavez "exercises power with a club or bag of money, blackmail, and seduction." Garcia added that Chavez unfairly divides Latin America with his "simplistic" and "offensive" vision that countries are either with him or the United States.

Civil Society

15. (C) Carlos Ponce, International Relations Director for the Venezuelan NGO Development and Justice Consortium, told PolCouns November 14 that he believes that not just governments, but also NGOs around the hemisphere are "waking up" and voicing concerns about the Chavez government. Ponce said Peruvian NGOs, such as the Institute for Legal Defense (IDL) and the Andean Commission of Jurists (CAJ), have been particularly supportive (within their limited means) of civil society in Venezuela. Ponce said such groups have been able to channel some international funding their way via regional NGO projects.

Comment

16. (C) Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro never met a microphone he did not like. And unlike former foreign minister Ali Rodriguez, who often tried to soften the edges of Chavez' radical and anti-American foreign policy, Maduro reflexively amplifies the BRV's international extremism with his incendiary rhetoric. As the BRV's unsuccessful UNSC seat bid demonstrated, Maduro's brand of "revolutionary" diplomacy is

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not winning friends and influencing people. Moreover, it is not only exacerbating strained relations with the United States, but also undermining traditional ties with countries such as Peru and Mexico.

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